

# A midsummer night's dream



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Symbolism in A Midsummer Night's Dream Symbolism is one of the most used devices throughout Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream. The symbols used throughout this play are done so to represent abstract ideas or concepts, increasing the meaning of the play without increasing the word count or the amount of explanation throughout the story.

The characters of Theseus and Hippolyta represent order throughout the play even though they only make themselves seen at the beginning of the first act and at the end of the final act. They have no part during the play, which calls to question their purpose. As these two characters appear in the daylight, including as the sun is rising in the final act, it can be said that they symbolize order and light, in contrast to the instability and darkness that the rest of the play is shrouded in. They are used to begin the play and to end it, again bringing with themselves a sense of order and direction.

The love potion is yet another symbol in the play. The fairies become reckless with the love potion, causing many of the characters to become crazy and infatuated with each other. Titania falls for Bottom, while Demetrius and Lysander cannot seem to make up their minds about whether they are in love with Hermia or Helena. Therefore, the love potion symbolizes the erratic, powerful nature of love. Even though the crazy love seen throughout this portion of the play is due to a potion, there really is no difference that can be seen with love that comes naturally. Love causes everyone to act in peculiar, humiliating ways.

Nature, though a smaller symbol than others in the play, is still a symbol. It symbolizes the fantasy that the play encompasses. Most fantasy tales, especially those dealing with fairies and the like, take place in a natural setting as this increases the visual appeal of this fantasy world and the

situations within it. The nature within this play simply symbolizes the fantastical aspects of the story.

The moon is perhaps one of the greatest symbols found within the play. However, the moon is a different symbol to each character of the play, enhancing its purpose to the plot and overall story. At night, when the moon is out, is when the craziness of the play is in full swing. Once the sun rises and the rooster shrills his good mornings, things calm down again. It is in this that the moon symbolizes the erratic changes of human behavior - something that can easily be seen, and has been proven, in real life. When the moon is evident in the play, the characters usually are acting up and in ways that are quite unlike themselves.

Others ways that the moon is used as a symbol is when someone is having a dream, to be the line between fantasy and reality, and chaos. All of these aspects can be traced back to the presence of the moon in any scene. As the moon is a mysterious object, providing light but still allowing the world to be engulfed in darkness, it acts as a symbol for other mysterious things, especially as the boundary between fantasy and reality. As can be seen throughout the play, strange things happen once the moon has risen, thus symbolizing chaos and the odd changing of human behavior.

Another rather ironic symbol is the play by the Craftsmen, or the play within the play. This little play pretty much sums up the finer points of A Midsummer Night's Dream, symbolizing the play itself. Like A Midsummer Night's Dream, the Craftsmen's play takes a serious concept - love - and turns it into something humorous through the situations that the characters unexpectedly go through.